

# *Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes\**

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*Theory:* Social psychological theories of social stereotyping are used to generate a series of predictions about the conditions under which whites' stereotypes of African-Americans are likely to bias their evaluations of blacks in the context of crime.

*Hypotheses:* Stereotypes of African-Americans should influence attitudes on crime policy primarily when criminals are black, crimes are violent, policies are punitive, and no individuating information seriously undercuts the stereotype.

*Methods:* Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) procedures are used to administer a series of survey experiments where the race and other characteristics of the target (e.g., criminal suspects, furlough programs, etc.) are manipulated in interviews with Lexington, Kentucky residents in a 1994 probability survey.

*Results:* Consistent with our expectations, we find a strong relationship between whites' images of African-Americans and judgments of crime and punishment, but only for black criminals who commit violent crimes, and only for punitive (vs. preventive) policies. Because these are the circumstances which typically surround the crime issue, we conclude that much of public opinion in this domain is influenced by racial concerns.

We know two things about public opinion on crime—it is salient and it matters. The salience of the issue is documented by numerous recent surveys which list crime at the very top of the list of public concerns and by the increasing temptation for individuals to resort to punitive, “get-tough” policies (Pettinico 1994).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as much as opinion in any other policy domain, public attitudes on crime are consequential. Throughout the 1990s, political rhetoric escalated, culminating in the 1994 campaigns featuring crime as a central campaign theme. While we cannot prove

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<sup>1</sup>As documented by various national surveys reviewed in Pettinico (1994), for example, by 1993 support for the death penalty had increased to 72% (compared to 43% in 1965) and 61% had come to the position that “punishment” rather than “rehabilitation” should be the primary purpose of prisons (compared to 15% in 1971).

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that increasingly punitive anticrime measures are driven by public outcry, such a scenario is supported by studies documenting a relationship between public opinion and state crime policy (e.g., Bowers and Waltman 1993).

Ironically, the salience of the issue has not encouraged analysts to focus on public opinion toward crime. In an effort to remedy this inattention, we explore the antecedents of public attitudes toward crime and punishment in this paper. More specifically, we focus on one potential source of such attitudes which is both plausible and undeniable—viz., race. Accordingly, the question we take up in this paper, is: to what extent, and under what circumstances, do racial attitudes influence whites' political thinking about crime and punishment?

We have several reasons for presupposing a linkage between race and crime, one of which stems from plentiful evidence that racial attitudes (including stereotypes) impact policy attitudes on other ostensibly "race-neutral" issues such as welfare (Gilens N.d.; Peffley and Hurwitz N.d.), as whites with more negative images of blacks tend to be less supportive of welfare programs, particularly if the recipients are described as being black. If the race-policy linkage exists in this domain, there is every reason to believe it exists in the realm of crime.

Second, we must acknowledge the regrettable but objective association in the "real world" between race and crime. While African-Americans make up between 12 and 13% of the general population in the United States, blacks accounted for more than half of all arrests for robbery and murder, and just under half of all inmates in state and federal correctional facilities in 1990. Without delving into the reasons behind these statistics (Hacker 1995; Meier 1994), it is a safe bet that these tragic associations have permeated the public consciousness in some way. Thus, if individuals conflate criminal activity with race, their views of crime are likely to be based, in some part, on their judgments of blacks.

This conflation is doubtless exacerbated by the critical role of the mass media. In his study of local news broadcasts, Entman (1992) found that violent crimes committed by blacks comprised a substantial portion of coverage of news stories centrally featuring blacks. Just as important, in video presentation black criminals were portrayed quite differently from white criminals. The former were more likely to remain unnamed, to be seen in handcuffs, in physical custody, and were less likely to speak for themselves. Thus, not only are African-Americans more likely than whites to be portrayed as criminal suspects in news stories about violent crime, but they are also more likely to be depicted as physically threatening, a pattern also noted by Jamieson (1992) in national network portrayals. These findings strongly suggest that the media contribution is one of both linking blacks to the issue of crime and, moreover, rendering stereotypes of blacks more negative.

The media are not alone in helping to forge this linkage. Political communications of all types are replete with messages in which crime is tinged with racial overtones, exemplified most perfectly in the infamous 1988 television ad run in opposition to the Democratic presidential candidate, in which Michael Dukakis was criticized for consenting to the furlough of prisoner Willie Horton. Defenders held the ad to be legitimate in focusing on the issue of Dukakis' "softness" on crime; critics charged that such a point could have been made without displaying a menacing looking picture of Horton, an African-American, during the spot (Jamieson 1992). Others have made the more general argument that issues like crime and welfare are "racially coded," allowing politicians to play upon racial animosities without explicitly playing the "race card" (Edsall and Edsall 1992).

Our belief, in sum, is that the conflation of race and crime—in reality, in the media, and in political communication; together with evidence from other policy areas that racial views shape attitudes on issues such as welfare—should be manifest in public attitudes on crime and punishment. Specifically, whites' attitudes toward crime are likely to be tied to their global stereotypes of African-Americans, with whites who see blacks as characteristically violent displaying more punitive views on issues such as rehabilitation, prison furloughs, and sentencing terms, at least when such policies are targeted for African-Americans.

We begin by reviewing the concept of stereotypes; that yields a series of hypotheses concerning how and when stereotypes of African-Americans are likely to influence whites' attitudes toward crime. Not only should images of blacks bias whites' views on crime and criminal suspects, but racial stereotypes should be more important, we argue, for certain types of crime, policies, and criminals. We then test these expectations using a variety of survey experiments that provide us with an appropriate blend of internal and external validity for our analysis. After discussing the survey results, we conclude with a discussion of the broader implications of our findings for the intersection of race and crime and public policy.

### **The Nature of Stereotypes**

Social stereotypes are commonly defined as "cognitive structures that contain the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about human groups" (Hamilton and Trier 1986, 133). As such, they are, in Walter Lippmann's (1922) classic phrase, "pictures in the head" which, like any other kind of cognitive generalization, allow cognitive misers with limited motivation and mental capacities to process ambiguous information more efficiently. The social cognition literature uses the term theory-driven processing to refer to this strategy, based on the assumption that stereotypes bias all stages of information processing (e.g., attention, retrieval, infer-

ence), such that they become strongly determinative of relevant judgments (e.g., Hamilton and Sherman 1994). In the context of race and crime, for example, those who stereotype blacks as “violent” or “hostile” may expect blacks to engage in criminal behavior, may attend to and recall more instances in which crimes are committed by African-Americans, and may interpret the behavior of blacks as being somehow “violent” or “criminal.”

Individuals, however, often engage in more data-driven processing strategies by relying more on the information of the specific case than on their global stereotypes when rendering a judgment. To account for the reality that stereotypes both are (when processing is theory-driven), and are not (when data-driven) associated with relevant judgments, continuum or dual process models have been developed (Fiske and Neuberg 1990). While cognitive misers generally prefer theory-driven strategies, they rely less on stereotypes, and more on information about the specific case, when stereotypes do not fit the particular stimulus, thereby predicting that stereotype and political judgment will be more closely linked when the case at hand seems to “fit” the individual’s stereotype (e.g., Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Rahn 1993).

The conditional importance of stereotypes in dual-process models is supported by recent studies: in a variety of settings, researchers (e.g., Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Carmines and Sniderman 1992; Peffley and Hurwitz 1993; Terkildsen 1993, and others) have found that the relationship between racial stereotypes and political judgments depends on a variety of limiting conditions, such as the way the policy is framed, the way blacks are described, and so on. Bobo and Kluegel (1993), for example, found racial stereotypes to be far stronger predictors of government programs when framed as designed to improve the standard of living for blacks (rather than poor people) and as “government assistance” (rather than “opportunity-enhancing”) programs. In another context, Peffley and Hurwitz (1993) found that racial stereotypes were more likely to shape political judgments of blacks who “fit” the pejorative stereotype. Stereotypical black welfare recipients (e.g., described as having trouble hanging onto a job) were judged more harshly than similarly described white welfare recipients—a discrimination that vanished when individuating information (e.g., being highly motivated) was offered to inhibit the stereotype.

### **Expectations**

A large and eclectic literature has shown convincingly that whites respond more punitively to blacks than to those of their own race. Experimental studies from social psychology, for example, show consistently that the same behaviors acted out by black and white targets are interpreted very

differently by white subjects, with the black target often seen as more guilty and more aggressive than the white (e.g., Duncan 1976; Rector, Bagby, and Nicholson 1993). More to the point, in "mock jury" trials, defendants who are African-American or Hispanic receive harsher judgments of guilt and punishment than white defendants, and are also seen as more likely to commit violent crimes in the future (e.g., Bodenhausen 1988). Outside the laboratory, blacks are disproportionately seen as guilty and deserving of punishment by whites. Even as children, blacks are treated more punitively than whites in schools (Meier, Stewart, and England 1989). As adults, the bias of the criminal justice system tilts against African-Americans, with blacks receiving stiffer sentences than whites and historically being more likely to receive the death penalty than whites, at least in rural areas.<sup>2</sup>

The tendency to judge and punish blacks more harshly is particularly prominent among whites who perceive African-Americans most pejoratively: Sweeney and Haney's (1992) meta-analysis of experimental studies investigating racial bias in sentencing decisions concludes that whites with negative racial stereotypes consistently distribute harsher sentences to blacks, relative to those with more generous images of African-Americans. If such experimental evidence generalizes to the outside world, racial stereotypes should play a crucial role in shaping whites' judgments in the criminal justice realm. Our baseline expectation, then, is that racial stereotypes are likely to drive whites' attitudes toward crime, criminal suspects, and criminals, at least when blacks become the focus of the question. Dual process models demand, however, that we formulate this expectation more conditionally.

### *When Stereotypes Affect Attitudes Toward Crime*

Individuals do not, in our view, display indiscriminate prejudice by responding more negatively to all blacks under all circumstances; rather, their judgments are linked to the stereotypes when, and only when, the case at hand fits the image. If stereotypes serve as functional heuristics in generating political judgments, we expect images of African-Americans to be more closely linked to attitudes on crime and punishment for certain types of crime, certain types of policies, and certain types of criminals. Identifying these conditions, we emphasize, is not merely an exercise of

<sup>2</sup>Evidence of racial discrimination in the application of the death penalty indicates that the racial bias is attenuated somewhat after controlling for the severity of the crime, and, at least in the era post-*Furman v. Georgia* (1972), some authors argue that the antiblack discrimination in rural areas is balanced somewhat by an alleged antiwhite discrimination in urban areas (e.g., White 1991, chap. 7). One unequivocal finding, however, is that killers of white victims are substantially more likely to receive the death penalty relative to killers of black victims.

interest to cognitive psychologists. To the contrary, such findings will tell us a great deal about when stereotypes matter politically.

*The Nature of the Crime.* First, we expect racial stereotypes to become more determinative of whites' attitudes toward crime when the crimes, themselves, are viewed as being a stereotypically "black crime." As Andrew Hacker (1995, 188) has remarked, "Quite clearly, 'black crime' does not make people think about tax evasion or embezzling from brokerage firms. Rather, the offenses generally associated with blacks are those . . . involving violence. . . ." Accordingly, we anticipate that stereotypes of African-Americans will be particularly important in biasing whites' judgments of blacks when the crime in question is a violent rather than a nonviolent crime. Given the aforementioned tendency of the media to portray blacks as menacing criminal suspects when covering violent crime, it is not surprising that recent national surveys suggest that the image of blacks as a violent underclass has become a central component of contemporary white stereotypes of African-Americans: one of the most popular negative beliefs expressed about "most" blacks is that they are "violent and aggressive" (Peffley and Hurwitz 1993). Sunnafrank and Fontes (1983) have found violent crimes (e.g., assault), but not nonviolent crimes, to be associated more frequently with blacks than with whites, while "mock jurors" are more likely to judge individuals accused of race stereotypic crimes as guilty and deserving of stiffer sentences (e.g., Bodenhausen and Wyer 1985; Gordon et al. 1988). Accordingly, our first experiment is designed to examine this proposition (that racial stereotypes are more important in whites' evaluations of violent, than nonviolent, crime) outside the laboratory setting.

*The Nature of the Policy.* Second, we expect race to play a more important role in shaping attitudes toward punitive policies, and a much smaller role in determining policies which are essentially preventive. By their very nature, punitive policies (e.g., "three strikes and you're out," building more prisons, eliminating prison furloughs) are targeted for individuals already in the criminal justice system—i.e., those who have already been stigmatized as violent and disobedient. Given the historic associations between race and punitiveness documented above (e.g., Bodenhausen 1988; Meier, Stewart, and England 1989), in such a context, racial stereotypes are all the more likely to be activated. Punitive policies targeted for black (but not white) prisoners, consequently, should be linked to respondents' racial stereotypes in the sense that those who see blacks as characteristically violent and disobedient should be substantially more likely to support programs designed to punish the perpetrator harshly.

Preventive policies, however, are designed to keep people out of the

criminal justice system. Drug rehabilitation and job training programs, for example, are intended to reduce the risk that individuals will turn to a life of crime by providing options (e.g., freedom from chemical dependency or employment skills) which are essential to the "straight" lifestyle (Gaubatz 1995). Because the targets of these programs are not yet stigmatized as hardened criminals, racial stereotypes should be substantially less relevant in predicting attitudes toward such policies—even when intended primarily for African-American neighborhoods.

*The Nature of the Criminal.* Third, racial stereotypes should be more important in whites' evaluations of certain types of criminals—viz., violent African-American criminals who fit negative impressions of blacks as a violent underclass. Dual process models of social stereotyping, for example, postulate that when the attributes of the individual target easily fit the global category, stereotypes are convenient and powerful heuristics. When individuating information clearly contradicts the stereotype, however (such as when an African-American criminal is described as making a serious effort to reform himself), the group image becomes less relevant (e.g., Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Peffley and Hurwitz 1993; Rahn 1993), thereby temporarily "disconnecting" the stereotype from the policy judgment.

We have, in sum, attempted to specify a set of conditions under which racial stereotypes should be linked to policy attitudes in the crime domain, arguing that this should be substantially more probable when crimes are violent, policies are punitive, and perpetrators most closely resemble the underclass stereotype. If our expectations are confirmed, the fact that these also happen to be the most salient categories of crime, remedy, and criminal, we shall argue in the conclusions, renders stereotypes extraordinarily important in the debate on crime.

## **Methods, Data, and Instrumentation**

### *Methods*

In exploring the questions of how and when whites' judgments of crime are affected by race, we conducted a series of survey experiments in which the race (and other characteristics) of the target in various questions about crime were systematically varied. One important advantage of this method is the ability to contrast the impact of racial stereotypes on policy judgments when the target in the question (e.g., prison inmates) is black to the impact of such stereotypes when the target is white. If images of blacks are found to shape judgments of white, as well as black, criminal suspects, there is reason to suspect that the relationship is spurious, due perhaps to the often-

noted tendency for social conservatives to express both racial prejudice and a desire to get tough on crime.

We could, of course, ask the same respondent about black and white criminal suspects, but this would raise obvious problems of response bias. To avoid this problem, we rely on Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology to randomly assign respondents to one of several question wording conditions. We then determine through a series of regression-based models the degree to which: 1) stereotypes of African-Americans are more influential in shaping responses to black than to white targets; and, just as important, 2) the conditions under which stereotypes are, and are not, influential in shaping whites' attitudes toward crime. Thus, our design, made possible with computer assisted interviewing, benefits from both the control and internal validity gained from experiments and the generalizability and external validity gained from probability surveys (Piazza, Sniderman, and Tetlock 1989).

### *Data*

The data for the analysis are drawn from a probability telephone survey (N = 501) of adults in the Lexington, Kentucky area, conducted by the University of Kentucky Survey Research Center (UKSRC). White respondents were selected through a variant of random digit dialing procedures and interviewed by the professional staff for approximately 15 to 20 minutes between June 22 and July 5, 1994 (see Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2 for further details).

### *Measures*

To assess the importance of racial stereotypes as determinants of crime policy attitudes, we included on the Lexington crime survey a generous number of policy experiments (used as dependent variables, and described in the course of the analysis below). Presently, we describe both the independent and control variables employed in the regression models.

*Black Racial Stereotypes.* While analysts have used an array of descriptors to assess stereotypes of African-Americans, we focus on two central attributes—laziness and violence—which both: (1) capture contemporary white resentment toward blacks; and (2) are particularly relevant to whites' political judgments of crime. "Old-fashioned" racism was founded on beliefs about the genetic inferiority of blacks. Current white stereotypes—fueled by media portrayals and political rhetoric—are more likely to characterize blacks pejoratively as a violent underclass of "welfare blacks," "streetwise blacks," and "ghetto blacks" (Devine and Baker 1991; Edsall

and Edsall 1992). Moreover, it is this picture of blacks as a violent, urban underclass which should influence whites' views on crime.

Accordingly, respondents were asked to rate "most blacks" on five semantic differential scales, each arrayed on a bipolar metric ranging from 1 to 7 (see Appendix items I.A. for the precise wording and sample means): "prone to violence" (vs. "not prone to violence"), "short-tempered" (vs. "even-tempered"), "hostile" (vs. "friendly"), "hardworking" (vs. "lazy") and "prefer to be self-supporting" (vs. "prefer to live off welfare").

*Control Variables.* To minimize the prospects for estimating spurious relationships, we include several control variables that are potentially associated with both African-American stereotypes and attitudes toward crime. For example, to control for the possibility that punitive attitudes toward crime are linked to black stereotypes because people with a more jaundiced view of human nature rate everyone (not just blacks) poorly, we included a White Stereotype Index (see Appendix items I.B.), which consists of the same adjective pairs used in the Black Stereotype Index (but asked in reference to "most whites").

In addition to the rather standard battery of political (partisan and ideological identifications) and demographic (education, age, gender, and income) variables, we include two other control variables with a special relevance to crime attitudes: punitiveness and civil liberties. The Punitiveness Index (see Appendix items II.A.) was designed to assess general support for using punishment as a way to deal with crime and misbehavior. The Civil Liberties Index (see Appendix items II.B.) measures support for due process in the criminal justice realm, particularly the right of the accused to a fair trial. In the forthcoming analyses, variables have been coded so that lower values correspond to more conservative, racially intolerant, and punitive responses so that expected relationships yield positive coefficients.<sup>3</sup>

### Analysis

As noted, we expect the impact of racial stereotypes on crime policy attitudes to be conditioned by three sources of variability—the crime, the policy, and the criminal.

<sup>3</sup>The correlation between black stereotypes and white stereotypes, Punitiveness, and Civil Liberties is .31, .17, and .25, respectively. The correlation between Punitiveness and Civil Liberties is .45. It should be noted that routine diagnostic tests found no obvious signs of multicollinearity in the estimated regression equations reported below.

*The Nature of the Crime: The Race and Crime Experiment*

To test the proposition that whites' stereotypes of blacks are a stronger determinant of attitudes toward crime in the context of violent crimes, we designed the Race and Crime Experiment in which both the race and the crime (assault vs. embezzlement) of the target are independently varied in the following pair of survey questions (see Appendix item III.A):

1. Consider a case in another city where a 21 year old [black/white] man was arrested for [beating a motorist before stealing his car/ embezzling thousands of dollars from the telephone company where he worked]. In your opinion, how likely is it that the man is guilty of the crime?
2. How likely is it that the man will commit a similar crime again in the near future?

Thus, a random one-quarter of the respondents is asked about a black assault case, and so on. If "black crimes" tend to be equated with violent crimes in the minds of whites, racial stereotypes are more likely to be activated in the context of the assault crime condition, where we would expect stereotypes to bias judgments against the black, but not the white, suspect.

To examine these expectations, judgments of the targets (in each of the four experimental conditions) were regressed on the two racial stereotype variables (black stereotypes and white stereotypes), and a variety of control variables, including political predispositions (punitiveness, civil liberties, party ID, and ideology), and sociodemographic variables (education, gender, age, and income).

Table 1 reports the OLS results for the four targets for each of the two survey questions. The findings lend considerable support to the crime stereotypicality hypothesis for, not only are black stereotypes important in shaping judgments of black, though not white, criminal suspects but, more germane to our present concern, they only affect judgments of the black accused of a violent crime (i.e., the black assault condition). Stereotypes are essentially irrelevant when judging blacks accused of the race-astereotypic crime of embezzlement. Presumably because whites do not envision the white-collar crime as a part of the underclass racial stereotype, the stereotype does not influence the judgment—of either present (Table 1.A) or future (Table 1.B) criminality. Yet, when whites are confronted with a crime that accords with the racial "picture in their head," then black stereotypes are strongly determinative of judgments: whites who view African-Americans as violent (and lazy) are far more likely to believe them to be guilty of assault, and also view them as likely to commit a similar (violent) crime again in the future.

**Table 1. Race and Crime Experiment**

Table 1.A. Predicting Assessments of Guilt across Race and Crime of Suspect  
Likely the [white, black] man is guilty of the crime [assault, embezzling]?

|                    | Black Assault |        |        | DESCRIPTION OF SUSPECT AND CRIME |       |               |        |                |        |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|--------|----------------------------------|-------|---------------|--------|----------------|--------|
|                    |               |        |        | Black Embezzle                   |       | White Assault |        | White Embezzle |        |
|                    | Stand.        | Unst.  | (se)   | Stand.                           | Unst. | (se)          | Stand. | Unst.          | (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .377          | .039** | (.008) | .177                             | .017  | (.010)        | -.083  | -.011          | (.014) |
| Constant           |               | -1.15* | (.389) |                                  | 1.15* | (.45)         |        | .41            | (.661) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .565          |        |        | .273                             |       |               | .198   |                | .223   |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .509          |        |        | .188                             |       |               | .101   |                | .133   |
| N                  | 98            |        |        | 105                              |       |               | 101    |                | 115    |

Table 1.B. Predicting Judgments of Future Crime across Race and Crime of Suspect  
Likely the [white, black] man will commit a similar crime [assault, embezzling] in the future?

|                    | Black Assault |        |        | DESCRIPTION OF SUSPECT AND CRIME |       |               |        |                |        |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|--------|----------------------------------|-------|---------------|--------|----------------|--------|
|                    |               |        |        | Black Embezzle                   |       | White Assault |        | White Embezzle |        |
|                    | Stand.        | Unst.  | (se)   | Stand.                           | Unst. | (se)          | Stand. | Unst.          | (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .303          | .028** | (.009) | -.014                            | -.002 | (.012)        | .185   | .022           | (.012) |
| Constant           |               | -.31   | (.439) |                                  | 1.13  | (.576)        |        | -.866          | (.614) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .301          |        |        | .357                             |       |               | .328   |                | .375   |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .210          |        |        | .281                             |       |               | .250   |                | .304   |
| N                  | 99            |        |        | 104                              |       |               | 105    |                | 106    |

Source: 1994 Lexington Race and Crime Survey.

Note: Entries are standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Lower values on the above variables indicate: judgments of greater likelihood of the black stereotype scale. Coefficients are also controlled for white stereotypes, political predispositions (punitiveness, civil liberties, ideology, party ID), and sociodemographic characteristics (education, gender, age, and income).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

*The Nature of the Policy*

To test the second proposition, that racial stereotypes play a larger role in shaping assessments of blacks when they are the targets of punitive versus preventive policies, the Lexington survey included several experiments of each type of policy where the race of the target in the question is randomly varied. Punitive policies are represented by questions on prison furloughs, prisoner rehabilitation, and prison terms for committing a carjacking; and preventive policies are gauged with questions on drug rehabilitation and job training programs.

*Prisoner Furlough Experiment.* No policy has been as politically-charged as the prison furlough program, which assumed center stage in the 1988 Bush campaign (via the focus given to Willie Horton, mentioned previously) and a number of 1994 congressional and gubernatorial races. To examine the degree to which attitudes on this policy are fueled by racial considerations, we designed the Furlough Experiment, in which respondents were randomly assigned into either the black or white treatment group and asked, first, the extent to which they approved of “programs to help prisoners—many of whom are [black/white]—adjust to life outside prison by granting them weekend furloughs near the end of their prison terms” (see Appendix item III.B). Subsequently, in an additional question, they were asked to gauge the likelihood that such prisoners would “commit more crimes while on weekend furlough.”

These assessments were regressed on the same set of predictors used in earlier models. The OLS results in Table 2.A.1 clearly show that while perceptions of African-Americans are unrelated to support for furloughs for white prisoners, negative stereotypes are far more likely to oppose furloughs for black prisoners, relative to those with less pejorative images.

Further analysis suggests that one important reason why negative stereotypes reject such furlough programs for blacks is because African-American prisoners are regarded as incorrigible and beyond rehabilitation. Evidence for this explanation can be found in Table 2.A.2, which displays the regression results for the next question in the furlough experiment. In the black (but, importantly, not the white) condition, whites with pejorative images of blacks are substantially more likely to believe that the prisoner will commit more crimes while out on furlough. Such pessimism for black prisoners, doubtless, underlies the strong tendency of these white respondents to reject the ideas of furloughs in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The impact of Black Stereotypes on furlough approval does appear to be indirect, mediated by judgments of whether such prisoners are likely to commit similar crimes on furlough. When responses to the second furlough question on committing crimes are inserted into the furlough approval equations (along with the other predictors in Table 2.A), judg-

*Rehabilitation Experiment.* To underscore the power of racial stereotypes to affect evaluations of punitive policies by shaping assessments of the likely criminal behavior of blacks, we turn to the rehabilitation experiment in Table 2.B, in which randomly assigned respondents were asked to "Consider a case where a 25 year-old [black/white] prisoner in the Kentucky State Penitentiary recently had a parole hearing, hoping to be released early from his sentence for manslaughter" (item III.C in Appendix). Quite clearly, perceptions of blacks as violent (and lazy) generate assumptions that black prisoners are incorrigible. Not only are negative stereotypers far more likely to believe black (but not white) prisoners are incapable of being rehabilitated (Table 2.B.1), but, when asked about black prisoners, are also more likely to believe they would engage in violent crimes in the future (Table 2.B.2).

*Carjack Experiment.* Punitive policies are most-directly exemplified by tough sentencing decisions. Our expectation in the Carjack Experiment, consequently, is that racial stereotypes should strongly affect judgments of punishment (and expectations for future criminality) for black felons convicted of carjacking, but not for white felons. Respondents were asked about three [black/white] teenagers arrested for a series of carjackings (see Appendix item III.D). Table 4 reports the regression results obtained from regressing whites' judgments of the black and white suspects. As before, when blacks are stigmatized as prisoners or criminal suspects, whites with strongly negative images of African-Americans are far more likely to believe that black (but not white) suspects will commit comparable crimes in the future (Table 2.C.1). More to the point, as shown in Table 2.C.2, such whites are also significantly more likely to believe a 10 year prison term to be too lenient for black carjackers (or, at least, to advocate relatively harsher sentences for felons of color).

*Preventive Policies: The Drug Rehabilitation and Job Training Experiments.* In Table 2, then, we have consistently demonstrated a pronounced tendency for racial stereotypes to condition assessments of punitive policies. Questions about furloughs, rehabilitation, and prison terms appear to activate racial stereotypes, which, in turn, bias judgments on such issues, but only for treatment conditions in which the target is black. The important

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ments about committing crimes are substantial (unstandardized  $b = .60$  and  $.65$  in the black and white equations, respectively), while the impact of the Black Stereotype variable on furlough approval for black prisoners essentially vanishes. We would not want to press this causal interpretation too far, however, in light of the close proximity of the two furlough items in the survey, especially since the approval item was actually asked *before* the committing crimes question in the interview.

**Table 2. Punitive Policy Experiments**

Table 2.A. Prison Furlough Experiment

1. Predicting Approval of Prison Furlough Programs across Race of Prisoners

|                    | Black Prisoners |               | White Prisoners |              |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
|                    | Stand.          | Unst. (se)    | Stand.          | Unst. (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .227            | .039** (.015) | -.072           | -.013 (.018) |
| Constant           |                 | .214 (.727)   |                 | .789 (.826)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .329            |               | .248            |              |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .262            |               | .161            |              |
| N                  | 119             |               | 106             |              |

2. Predicting Likelihood of [Black/White] Prisoners Committing Crimes on Furlough

|                    | Black Prisoners |              | White Prisoners |              |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
|                    | Stand.          | Unst. (se)   | Stand.          | Unst. (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .237            | .035* (.012) | -.182           | -.028 (.015) |
| Constant           |                 | .135 (.593)  |                 | .835 (.706)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .255            |              | .271            |              |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .178            |              | .184            |              |
| N                  | 119             |              | 115             |              |

Table 2.B. Rehabilitation Experiment

1. Predicting Likelihood of Rehabilitating [Black/White] Prisoner

|                    | Black Prisoner |               | White Prisoner |              |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
|                    | Stand.         | Unst. (se)    | Stand.         | Unst. (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .272           | .044** (.011) | -.106          | -.016 (.011) |
| Constant           |                | 1.35* (.528)  |                | 1.32* (.505) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .155           |               | .161           |              |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .112           |               | .115           |              |
| N                  | 225            |               | 211            |              |

2. Predicting Likelihood of [Black/White] Prisoner Committing Future Crime

|                    | Black Prisoner |               | White Prisoner |             |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
|                    | Stand.         | Unst. (se)    | Stand.         | Unst. (se)  |
| Black Stereotype   | .211           | .026** (.001) | .061           | .007 (.008) |
| Constant           |                | 1.18* (.411)  |                | .089 (.359) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .145           |               | .165           |             |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .101           |               | .120           |             |
| N                  | 224            |               | 215            |             |

**Table 2. (continued)****Table 2.C. Carjacking Experiment****1. Predicting Judgments of Punishment of Suspected Carjackers across Race of Suspects**

If suspects found guilty, would a 10 year term be too lenient, about right, or too severe?

|                    | <b>Black Suspects</b> |        |        | <b>White Suspects</b> |        |        |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|--------|--------|
|                    | Stand.                | Unst.  | (se)   | Stand.                | Unst.  | (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .214                  | .019** | (.006) | -.027                 | -.003  | (.006) |
| Constant           |                       | 1.11** | (.294) |                       | 1.39** | (.321) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .157                  |        |        | .217                  |        |        |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .115                  |        |        | .177                  |        |        |
| N                  | 228                   |        |        | 225                   |        |        |

**2. Predicting Likelihood of Committing Similar Crime in Future across Race of Suspects**

How likely commit a crime like this in the future?

|                    | <b>Black Suspects</b> |        |        | <b>White Suspects</b> |       |        |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|-------|--------|
|                    | Stand.                | Unst.  | (se)   | Stand.                | Unst. | (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .252                  | .032** | (.008) | .0179                 | .002  | (.009) |
| Constant           |                       | 1.38** | (.412) |                       | .966* | (.462) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .202                  |        |        | .089                  |       |        |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .159                  |        |        | .041                  |       |        |
| N                  | 216                   |        |        | 217                   |       |        |

*Source:* 1994 Lexington Race and Crime Survey.

*Note:* Entries are standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Lower values on the above variables indicate: more negative ratings on the Black Stereotype scale, greater disapproval of furlough program, greater likelihood of prisoners committing crimes while on furlough, prisoners less likely to be rehabilitated, likely to commit violent crimes again, 10 year prison term for carjacking suspects too lenient, carjacking suspects likely to commit similar crime in the future. Coefficients are also controlled for white stereotypes, political predispositions (punitiveness, civil liberties, ideology, party ID), and sociodemographic characteristics (education, gender, age, and income).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

contrast, according to our hypothesis that some policies are more susceptible to racially-based decision making than others, is between the policies just examined and what might be considered preventive policies.

Such policies are the focus of survey experiments analyzed in Table 3, where we asked respondents about their support for "spending more money on social programs to help people get jobs" and "creating drug rehabilitation programs" (see items III.E in Appendix). In each experiment, subjects were randomly assigned to respond to programs in either black or white neighborhoods as ways of dealing with crime.

**Table 3. Preventative Policy Experiments****Table 3.A. Predicting Approval of Spending on Social Programs to Help People Get Jobs**

Approve of things law enforcement might do to deal with crime in mostly [black, white] inner city neighborhoods?

|                    | Black Neighborhoods |               | White Neighborhoods |             |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
|                    | Stand.              | Unst. (se)    | Stand.              | Unst. (se)  |
| Black Stereotype   | .035                | .005 (.010)   | .044                | .007 (.010) |
| Constant           |                     | 2.01** (.529) |                     | 2.21 (.539) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .171                |               | .203                |             |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .128                |               | .163                |             |
| N                  | 247                 |               | 232                 |             |

**Table 3.B. Predicting Approval of Creating More Drug Rehabilitation Programs?**

|                    | Black Neighborhoods |              | White Neighborhoods |               |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
|                    | Stand.              | Unst. (se)   | Stand.              | Unst. (se)    |
| Black Stereotype   | -.011               | -.002 (.010) | .052                | .007 (.009)   |
| Constant           |                     | 1.63* (.531) |                     | 2.92** (.511) |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .148                |              | .132                |               |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .102                |              | .089                |               |
| N                  | 217                 |              | 232                 |               |

Source: 1994 Lexington Race and Crime Survey.

Note: Entries are standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Lower values on the above variables indicate: greater disapproval of creating more social (jobs) programs and drug rehabilitation programs, and more negative ratings on the black stereotype scale. Coefficients are also controlled for white stereotypes, political predispositions (punitiveness, civil liberties, ideology, party ID), and sociodemographic characteristics (education, gender, age, and income).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

The stereotype coefficients indicate that this is, indeed, the case. Not only are the racial stereotype variables statistically insignificant, but the unstandardized coefficients (appropriate for purposes of comparison with the comparable entries in Table 2) are close to zero. Quite clearly, assessments of preventive programs—even when targeted to African-Americans, failed to activate whites' racial stereotypes. In fact, the only significant predictor of such policies is punitiveness (not shown), which doubtless prompts individuals to reject preventive programs, in general, in favor of more punitive strategies for dealing with crime.

In summary, we find that in the context of punitive policies, negative

racial stereotypes condition bleak predictions of future criminal behavior, which prompt a more punitive orientation to “get-tough” with black (but not white) criminals. In the context of preventive policies, however, stereotypes are much less consequential, presumably because such programs are intended for individuals not yet stigmatized as violent.

### *The Nature of the Criminal*

To explore the third proposition that stereotypes of blacks as a violent underclass are particularly relevant when the target is a violent black criminal, we return to the Prison Furlough Experiment (displayed in part in Table 1). In our prior discussion of these data, we presented only half of the cases—i.e., those in which subjects responded to either black or white violent criminals—to demonstrate that black stereotypes determine furlough support for black, but not white, prisoners. For present purposes, we note that the experiment makes use of not just one, but two, variations in question wording. The full question stem (item III.B in Appendix) is as follows:

Some states have programs to help prisoners—many of whom are [black/white] adjust to life outside prison by granting them weekend furloughs near the end of their prison terms. Many of the prisoners eligible for these programs are [model prisoners/prisoners who have committed violent crimes].

Because the two subject assignments are independent of each other, one-quarter of the sample is placed in the black-model condition, one-quarter into the black-violent condition, and so on. Our expectation is that the importance of racial stereotypes will be far less important to respondents assigned to the black-model condition than to those assigned to the black-violent condition (i.e., those who are exposed to individuating information which is consistent with the negative stereotype).

Consistent with our expectations, racial stereotypes drive evaluations of the furlough programs when black prisoners are described as having committed violent crimes. Presumably because such inmates closely match the images held by negative stereotypers, these respondents are substantially more inclined to reject furlough programs for such prisoners (Table 4.A) and to expect them to commit additional crimes while on furlough (Table 4.B), relative to whites with less pejorative stereotypes. Racial stereotypes are rendered irrelevant, however, when whites are responding to “model (black) prisoners” who fit less well with the pejorative image of African-Americans as a violent underclass.

### **Conclusions**

As social scientists more fully realize the importance of group perceptions, they have naturally turned their attention to the study of social stereo-

**Table 4. Prison Furlough Experiment: Type of Criminal**

Table 4.A. Predicting Approval of Prison Furlough Programs across Prisoner Descriptions

|                    | DESCRIPTION OF PRISONERS |             |                       |              |                         |              |                       |              |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|                    | Black Violent Prisoners  |             | Black Model Prisoners |              | White Violent Prisoners |              | White Model Prisoners |              |
|                    | Stand.                   | Unst. (se)  | Stand.                | Unst. (se)   | Stand.                  | Unst. (se)   | Stand.                | Unst. (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .227**                   | .039 (.015) | .090                  | .014 (.016)  | -.072                   | -.013 (.018) | -.150                 | -.024 (.016) |
| Constant           |                          | .214 (.727) |                       | 2.3** (.766) |                         | .789 (.826)  |                       | .195 (.797)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .329                     |             | .238                  |              | .248                    |              | .165                  |              |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .261                     |             | .141                  |              | .161                    |              | .078                  |              |
| N                  | 119                      |             | 101                   |              | 106                     |              | 117                   |              |

Table 4.B. Predicting Likelihood of Prisoners Committing Crimes on Furlough across Prisoner Descriptions

|                    | DESCRIPTION PRISONERS   |              |                       |              |                         |              |                       |              |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|                    | Black Violent Prisoners |              | Black Model Prisoners |              | White Violent Prisoners |              | White Model Prisoners |              |
|                    | Stand.                  | Unst. (se)   | Stand.                | Unst. (se)   | Stand.                  | Unst. (se)   | Stand.                | Unst. (se)   |
| Black Stereotype   | .237*                   | .035 (.013)  | .079                  | .010 (.014)  | -.182                   | -.028 (.015) | -.002                 | -.001 (.014) |
| Constant           |                         | -.135 (.593) |                       | 1.47* (.665) |                         | .835 (.706)  |                       | .866 (.663)  |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .255                    |              | .255                  |              | .270                    |              | .197                  |              |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | .178                    |              | .160                  |              | .184                    |              | .112                  |              |
| N                  | 119                     |              | 101                   |              | 115                     |              | 117                   |              |

Source: 1994 Lexington Race and Crime Survey.

Note: Entries are standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Lower values on the above variables indicate: greater disapproval of furlough program, greater likelihood of prisoners committing crimes while on furlough, and more negative ratings on the black stereotype scale. Coefficients are also controlled for white stereotypes, political predispositions (punitiveness, civil liberties, ideology, party ID), and sociodemographic characteristics (education, gender, age, and income).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

types, focusing particularly on the political and social consequences of racial perceptions. Indeed, there is an excellent extant literature exploring the ways in which stereotypes of African-Americans shape views of government assistance programs (see Bobo and Kluegel 1993, and Sniderman and Piazza 1993, for examples). These studies have underscored the point that stereotypes are more than mere cognitive heuristics; while the theoretical work of those in the field of social cognition is invaluable for the purpose of exploring the cognitive properties of stereotypes, it is also useful to be reminded that stereotypes can be profoundly consequential, serving to shape debate concerning public policy and electoral politics.

While scholars have concentrated on the link between racial stereotypes and welfare, there is another important component to contemporary white images of African-Americans—viz., violence. Quite clearly, by the late 1960s a new set of traits began to creep into the black stereotype shared by many whites (Stephan and Rosenfield 1982)—traits often described as “aggressive,” “violent,” or “hostile.” To be sure, these characteristics are presently among the most often-mentioned traits by whites when asked about African-Americans, along, of course, with those dispositions associated with the work ethic (e.g., lazy). If, as Reeves and Campbell (1994) have suggested, the black female has come to represent the welfare queen to many whites, the black male increasingly has come to represent the criminal.

But this prevalent view of African-Americans as a violent black underclass has gone largely unexplored, despite the high probability that this image is politically consequential. To what degree is public opinion on this topic driven by racial perceptions? As we shall argue below, the answer to this question is important for it sheds light on the rationality of political discourse.

In what ways are racial stereotypes linked to views of crime? Given the documented disproportionate involvement of African-Americans in crime, of media accounts which often portray blacks as criminals and not much more, and of political rhetoricians who may “play the race card” in the course of campaign treatments of crime, we were not surprised to find a substantial and recurrent overlap between negative African-American stereotypes and more punitive views of crime policy among our white respondents over a variety of survey experiments. We are confident that this linkage is not spurious inasmuch as negative stereotypes affect judgments of black targets, but not similarly-described white targets, under a variety of relevant control variables. We are therefore quite confident in concluding that, for many whites, crime policy attitudes are fueled by their racial beliefs.

This link between race and crime is neither inevitable nor universal,

however, for as we have learned, it occurs only when the specific case fits the more general stereotype. Only when crimes are violent and when policies are punitive are negative stereotypes substantially more likely to see blacks as guilty of crimes (in the Race and Crime Experiment), to envision more crimes in the future (in the Race and Crime, Carjack, Furlough, and Rehabilitation Experiments), and to favor harsher punishments (in the Carjack and Furlough Experiments). But these tendencies can also be short-circuited in the presence of individuating information. As demonstrated in the Prison Furlough Experiment of Table 4, black criminals are not treated more harshly if the respondent is given the information which is inconsistent with the pejorative stereotype (i.e., that the target is a "model prisoner"). In short, specific information which diverges from the stereotype in important ways—whether pertaining to the crime, the policy, or the criminal—will serve to render the racial stereotype irrelevant as a determinant of the crime policy attitude.

What does this analysis tell us about crime as a potential wedge issue in American politics? How easy is it for political elites to "play the race card" and thereby encourage citizens to think about crime in essentially racially-coded ways? Most broadly, is public concern with crime largely a function of racial beliefs?

Quite clearly, the heightened and intensified public preoccupation with crime is not proportionate to any real changes in the violent crime rate of the recent past (Gaubatz 1995). Federal statistics document that such crimes are becoming more, not less, rare. If the hypersalience of the crime issue is not a response to real-world events, then, it must necessarily be based on some less rational foundations—foundations, quite possibly, such as the racial fears and animosities of the American public.

Obviously—and we emphasize this caveat—not all thinking about crime is rooted in racism. At the same time, however, several facts are inescapable. Regrettably, African-Americans comprise a disproportionate share of those arrested for crimes. Numerous high profile cases (e.g., Michael Jackson, Mike Tyson, and, of course, O. J. Simpson), furthermore, reinforce this link in a dramatic fashion. And, as studies increasingly make clear, the media are more likely to contribute to, than detract from, the conflation of race and crime. When audiences see African-Americans in televised news stories, it is usually in the context of crime. Law-abiding blacks (who, of course, comprise the overwhelming majority of African-Americans) are less likely to be portrayed than blacks who have broken the law. As Entman (1992) and Jamieson (1992) have shown, network news portrayals of blacks are, indeed, menacing portraits. Blacks are often shown in handcuffs, in mug shots, in physical custody, and to be unnamed and unspoken. In short, they are demonized rather than humanized—a tendency

which is not counterbalanced because whites so rarely get to see blacks portrayed in the news as lawful, contributing members of society. Experimental evidence suggests, moreover, that even a brief visual image of a black male in a typical nightly news story on crime is powerful and familiar enough to activate viewers' negative stereotypes of blacks, producing racially biased evaluations of black criminal suspects (Peffley, Shields, and Williams 1996). Thus, because media treatments of blacks reinforce rather than individuate racial stereotypes, it would indeed be surprising to find whites' racial beliefs to be unconnected to their views of crime.

Recent studies of the "war on drugs" in the 1980s provide an excellent example of how zealous anticrime policies and sympathetic media coverage can conspire to create violent images of a black underclass. Based on an exhaustive study of drug enforcement policies, for example, Meier (1994) concludes that the brunt of the war on drugs clearly fell on urban blacks: although the use of illicit drugs is roughly equal among blacks and whites, blacks (who constitute only 12.4% of the population) accounted for approximately 40% of all persons arrested for drug offenses. The dramatically higher arrest rates of blacks are, according to Meier, traceable to a series of state and federal laws which provided stiffer punishments for violations involving crack versus powder cocaine (the former is consumed more by blacks, the latter by whites), despite the fact that the two drugs are chemically equivalent.

Once the mass media were enlisted into the war on drugs, racial differences emerged in the way drug offenders were portrayed. One study of network coverage of the drug war from 1981 to 1988 found that as the focus of drug enforcement efforts shifted from powder to crack cocaine, the media frame shifted dramatically from white, suburban drug users in need of therapy to riveting images of violent black drug offenders in the inner city who were beyond the point of rehabilitation (Reeves and Campbell 1994). The vivid and stigmatizing images from the battlefield—"customers cruising the crack houses, trembling crack babies, cops going in for the bust as the hand-held camera shakes along behind" (Gitlin 1989, 17)—portrayed black drug offenders as the "enemy within." The correspondence between these media images and the "pictures in the head" of many of our white respondents—of blacks as a violent underclass beyond rehabilitation and requiring stiffer punishment—is striking.

We began this work open to the possibility that race would be omnipresent in the debate about crime—i.e., that virtually all crime-related issues would be approached, at least by many individuals, as a decision influenced by racial judgments. But we found racial stereotypes to be only modestly correlated with attitudes toward generic crime issues (e.g., the death penalty), our punitiveness and civil liberties scales, and so on (see

Note 4). As well, we found them to be unimportant as determinants of responses toward nonviolent crimes and preventive policies.

The conditional impact of race, however, in no way minimizes its importance. Violent crimes committed by blacks, and the policies designed to punish them, are the very images which drive public fears. When many citizens respond to questions about crime, they are thinking about precisely such scenarios, not the prevention of white-collar malfeasance. Thus, the finding that many crime-related concerns are conceptualized race-neutrally should not obscure the likelihood that race and crime can be, and often are, conflated. They are conflated by the media, by individuals like Charles Stewart and Susan Smith (both of whom blamed African-American males for crimes they, themselves, committed), and by cynical political messengers who "Willie Hortonize" campaigns.

A debate on crime policy which is fundamentally designed to elicit visceral and angry images of race is both irrational and divisive. We should, therefore, very closely scrutinize public policy debates on crime. To the degree that political discourse is based on the unnecessary infusion of race, public anticrime policy will turn more on passion than on reason.

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## APPENDIX

### Survey Measures and Sample Characteristics

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#### I. Racial Stereotypes

- A. The Black Stereotype Index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ) items were selected because they appropriately reflect the two prominent domains of the violent underclass stereotype (i.e., violence and laziness). The items were based on the following question: Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to describe a 7-point scale that I'd like you to use to describe the characteristics of most blacks. . . . Where would you rate most blacks on this scale where 1 means \_\_\_\_\_ and 7 means \_\_\_\_\_ [and 4 means you think most blacks don't lean one way or the other]? The five semantic differentials were: hardworking—lazy, prone to violence—not prone to violence, short-tempered—even-tempered, prefer to be self-supporting—prefer to live off welfare, and hostile—friendly. Responses to the 7-point scales are coded such that lower values indicate more negative assessments of most blacks.
- B. The White Stereotypes Index (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .67$ ) was assessed by asking

respondents to use the same five scales to describe some characteristics of most white people.

Due to our theoretical interest in uncovering the impact of black stereotypes, as cognitive expectancies, on political judgments about blacks, we enter the Black and White Stereotype scales as separate variables in the equations below. Others analysts, such as Bobo and Kluegel (1993), have used stereotype items to compute difference scores (by subtracting ratings of "whites in general" from ratings of "blacks in general") to measure "prejudice," a concept which the authors argue involves attributing less positive characteristics to blacks than whites. Because our theoretical interest lies in stereotypes as cognitions (i.e., cognitive expectancies about the traits and behaviors of social groups) rather than as prejudice (which has traditionally been defined as a more global, affective predisposition toward a group, similar to social distance), subtracting ratings of other groups would, for our purposes, only muddy the conceptual and empirical waters. We note, however, that the basic pattern of our results would be unaffected by substituting difference scores for separate Black and White Stereotype scales in the equations below, since difference scores are statistically significant in exactly the same equations as the Black Stereotype measure.

## II. Political Predispositions

- A. Punitiveness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .53$ ) was measured with several Likert items, including "There would be less trouble in our society if parents and teachers used more good old-fashioned physical punishment to make people behave properly,"<sup>a</sup> "To really reduce crime in this country we need to focus more on reducing poverty instead of just cracking down on criminals,"<sup>a</sup> "The best way to deal with violent crime is to dramatically increase prison terms for people who commit violent crimes,"<sup>a</sup> "I strongly favor the death penalty for anyone convicted of murder,"<sup>a</sup> "In dealing with criminals, it is more important to rehabilitate them than to punish them."<sup>a</sup>
- B. Civil Liberties (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .59$ ) was measured with the following Likert items: "Accused rapists and child molesters have every right to a fair trial,"<sup>a</sup> "Far too many guilty people are set free because of some legal technicality,"<sup>a</sup> "If someone is caught red-handed beating and robbing an elderly person on the street, it is just a waste of taxpayers's money to bother with the usual expensive trial,"<sup>a</sup> and "Taxpayers should not have to pay for lawyers to defend poor people who are obviously guilty of committing a crime."<sup>a</sup>

## III. Survey Experiments

- A. Race and Crime Experiment: Consider a case in another city where a 21 year old [black/white] man was arrested for [beating a motorist before stealing his car/embezzling 1000's of dollars from the telephone company where he worked]. Despite the evidence against him, the man pleaded not guilty. (1) In your opinion, how likely is it that the man is guilty of the crime?<sup>b</sup> (2) How likely is it that the man will commit a similar crime again in the near future?<sup>b</sup>
- B. Prison Furlough Experiment (Punitive Policy): Some states have programs

to help prisoners—many of whom are [black/white]—adjust to life outside prison by granting them weekend furloughs near the end of their prison terms. Many of the prisoners eligible for these programs are [model prisoners/prisoners who have committed violent crimes]. (1) Do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of such programs? (2) In your opinion, how likely is it that prisoners in programs like this will commit more crimes while they're on a weekend furlough?<sup>b</sup>

- C. Rehabilitation Experiment (Punitive Policy): Consider a case where a 25 year old [black/white] male prisoner in the Kentucky State Penitentiary recently had a parole hearing, hoping to be released early from his sentence for manslaughter. Even though he was described as a model prisoner, many people believe that it is impossible to rehabilitate criminals like him. (1) In your opinion, how likely is it that prisoners like him can be rehabilitated?<sup>b</sup> (2) How likely is it that prisoners like him will commit a violent crime in the future?<sup>b</sup>
- D. Carjacking Experiment: Consider a case in another city where three [black/white] teenagers (about 18 years old) were arrested for a series of "carjackings," where cars are stolen from their owners by forcing the owner off the road and ordering them out of the car. Lawyers for the three suspects maintain that their clients were arrested only because they were [black/driving an old car and had long hair]. (1) If the suspects were found guilty of the crime, do you think a minimum 10 year prison term would be too lenient, about right, or too severe? (2) How likely do you think it is that the suspects will commit a crime like this in the future?<sup>b</sup>
- E. Preventive Anticrime Policy Experiments: Here are some things that law enforcement might do to deal with the problems of drugs and crime in mostly [black/white] neighborhoods in the inner city. For each one, please tell me whether you strongly approve, somewhat approve, or somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove. (1) Spending more on social programs to help people in these neighborhoods get jobs? (2) Creating more drug rehabilitation programs for people in these neighborhoods?

<sup>a</sup>Response options were "strongly agree, not so strongly agree, not so strongly disagree, strongly disagree."

<sup>b</sup>Response options were "very likely, likely, unlikely, very unlikely."

**Table A.1. Lexington Population and Sample Characteristics**

|                          | Lexington Population | Lexington Sample     |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Gender                   |                      |                      |
| Male                     | 48%                  | 43.6%                |
| Female                   | 52                   | 56.4                 |
| Median Income            | \$17,941             | \$20,000 to \$30,000 |
| Education                |                      |                      |
| Less than high school    | 19.8%                | 7.6%                 |
| High school graduate     | 23.4%                | 24.9%                |
| Some college             | 26.2                 | 24.7                 |
| Four-year college degree | 18.6                 | 23.9                 |
| College graduate work    | 12.0                 | 18.1                 |

*Note:* Lexington-Fayette County population characteristics are from the 1990 U.S. Census. The Median Income for the Lexington sample refers to the median income category used in the interview. Because the sample overrepresents more educated (and affluent) individuals, it was weighted to reflect education levels in the Lexington population. The sample does not include African-Americans, who comprise 13% of the Lexington population because the cost of oversampling blacks to gain a representative black subsample was prohibitive.

**Table A.2. Whites' Ratings of "Most" Blacks**

| Black Stereotype Item                                   | Mean Rating | % Negative Rating |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Hardworking—lazy                                        | 3.809       | 24.7%             |
| Prone to violence—not prone to violence                 | 4.104       | 30.7              |
| Short-tempered—even-tempered                            | 4.439       | 20.1              |
| Prefer to be self-supporting—prefer to live off welfare | 4.155       | 41.3              |
| Hostile—friendly                                        | 4.491       | 20.8              |

*Note:* Means are based on 7-point scales (see above for question wording). "Negative ratings" on the 7-point scales are those that fall below 4 (or above 4 for the hardworking and self-supporting items) on the 7-point scale. The ratings of "most blacks" here are slightly less negative than those obtained in national surveys where, for example, 31% of whites rates "most blacks" as "lazy" and 36.5% rated "blacks in general" as "lazy" (versus hardworking) (see Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman n.d., Table 1 and Note 2).

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